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# A STORY FROM THE DAILY LIFE OF A PRIVATE DUTY NURSE<sup>1</sup>

BY BESSIE LESWING, R.N.

**I**N my brief experience as a private duty nurse, I have found the work a series of adventures, some pleasant and some not so pleasant, but as I enjoy variety, this phase of nursing naturally appeals to me.

Early last spring, when the roads were one mud puddle after another, I answered a call from the Central Directory for a medical case in the country. As an extra supply of clothes is needed for the country, I filled my traveling bags to overflowing and rushed off to the station, reaching there out of breath, but just in time to get my car. After a three hours' ride, with a change of cars, I was met at the station by the doctor and, as the little Ford chugged along through the mud, he told me about my patient. Along with a few minor ailments, she had phlegmasia alba dolens, chronic gall-bladder trouble, and myocarditis. The doctor thought she might live a week. As we neared the house, he explained that the family was a little crowded for room, there being seven children—the youngest six months old, in addition to the patient and her husband and the house had only three rooms including the kitchen. With this information I was not surprised to find a delirious patient in the middle of a low double bed, with a sadly soiled feather bed under her, and the house (what there was of it), filled with well meaning relatives and friends. As it was six o'clock in the evening and the doctor had other patients to see, he hurriedly gave me my orders, pinched the pink ear of the youngest child and departed.

I felt a little weak when I looked about me, but my uniform always gives me courage, so I found an unoccupied corner and quickly changed from traveling clothes. I then gently dismissed the congregation, made the patient as comfortable as possible, started the treatment ordered by the doctor, snatched a bite to eat, and at a late hour tried to get a little rest on an old back-breaking couch. The next morning the patient's sister told me she had a single bed which she would gladly have loaned her sister, but the husband thought the bed she was in was good enough. I told her to have the bed sent over and if the husband had anything to say to refer him to me. Within a short time we had the patient in the single bed and I appropriated for myself the double bed, minus feathers. It was far from comfortable, but was better than the rickety old couch. Five of the children were sent to their grandfather's, the oldest girl staying at home to do the work, and of course we kept the baby.

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Private Duty Section of the Indiana State Nurses' Association, October, 1921.

For two weeks I gave medicine hypodermatically every two hours, day and night (the family took turns sitting up nights and calling me at medicine time) ; at the end of two weeks the patient began to improve and soon insisted upon having the children at home during the day. To keep her from worrying, I patched the boys' overalls, front and rear, made some dresses for the baby, gave lessons in sanitation, personal hygiene, dietetics, plain cooking, infant feeding, and managing a miserly husband. I soon learned that the husband had money but hated to spend it on the family. My chief "indoor sport" was asking him for things needed for the wife and babe and watching the agonized expression on his face as he handed over the money. I stayed four weeks and left the patient able to be up and about her room and ready to "carry on." The family was so grateful for my services that they offered to find me a husband, so if I am ever missed from the ranks you will know what has happened.

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## THE VALUE OF NOTE BOOKS, QUIZ, AND COMPETITION IN CLASS WORK

BY GRACE HEATLEY, R.N.

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A STACK of monotonous looking note books, two or three bundles of uncorrected examination papers, and a row of heads into which a certain amount of knowledge must be pressed in a given length of time,—this is the meaning of teaching to many. But it is a crude conception; teaching or, in other words, instilling in other minds facts which seem of vital importance, is tense, stimulating and satisfying work.

Frankly, the correction of note books is monotonous, it might even be called a necessary evil. Necessary, because not only must a student know how to sift the important from the less important facts, but also, she must learn to summarize the useful material into concise, well expressed English terms; an evil, because of the amount of time demanded for the correction. In regard to note books, the duty of an instructor should be to teach the methods of taking, and to prove to students the value of, good notes. Until the student has learned this for herself, direct supervision of note books is imperative, but after the student has been thoroughly taught, the responsibility of her note book rests on her own shoulders, not the instructor's. The appearance of the note book deserves comment, but greater stress laid on the notes taken is advisable.

Correction of examination papers is a far more interesting piece